



**CHANGING  
JEWISH LIVES**  
TRANSFORMING  
ISRAELI SOCIETY

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**2020 IMPACT REPORT**



**ITIM**

The Right To Live Jewish





# TO OUR SUPPORTERS WITH GRATITUDE FOR YOUR GENEROSITY

Dear Friends:



**As we present this Impact Report, ITIM marks the end of a challenging but productive year.**

**In 2020, the COVID pandemic required us to work remotely, to think creatively, and to address a new set of issues regarding health and safety in Jewish life.** We refocused our efforts to monitor State religious authorities' adherence to health regulations, and to help people hold small weddings and funerals.

**At the same time, the pandemic reinforced our sense of the importance of our work to the broad Jewish public.** More than 4,000 people called the ITIM Assistance Center hotline—a seven percent increase from last year. A record number of people converted to Judaism through the Giyur K'Halacha Conversion Court Network. And, despite health and economic concerns, people turned to ITIM, as always, for help righting the wrongs of the State religious establishment.

**You, our supporters, were integral partners in ITIM's provision of these essential Jewish services. For this, we thank you. We look forward to continuing our partnership in good health.**

Rabbi Seth Farber, PhD  
Founder & Director

# ITIM THROUGH THE YEARS

**2002**

Rabbi Seth Farber founds ITIM

**2004**

Rabbi Farber appears before Israel's Chief Rabbis to defend a woman's right to a State-sanctioned wedding

**2006**

Israel's Chief Rabbis invite ITIM to speak at conferences about improving State religious services

**2008**

ITIM exposes the difficulties immigrants from the former Soviet Union face when trying to prove their Jewish identities  
ITIM featured in *The New York Times Magazine*

**2010**

**10,000<sup>th</sup>** person contacts the Assistance Center

**2012**

ITIM establishes the **Advocacy Center**

**2003**

ITIM establishes the **Assistance Center**

**2005**

ITIM creates a **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Program** in **10** schools

ITIM produces a website for immigrants from the former Soviet Union

**2007**

ITIM appears before Israel's Supreme Court to defend a woman's right to convert

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Program expands to **90** schools

**2009**

Bar/Mitzvah Program reaches **175** schools, and is adopted by the Israel Ministry of Education

**2011**

ITIM Supreme Court victory requires the State to recognize Orthodox conversions for aliya

**2013**

ITIM Supreme Court victory enables **50,000** converts to marry in State-sanctioned weddings

## 2014

**30** Knesset Members support ITIM initiatives

ITIM's advocacy work enables **800** families/year to participate in the burial of stillborns

Chief Rabbinate concedes to ITIM pressure to make decision-making processes transparent

## 2016

ITIM Supreme Court victory ensures privacy for **500,000** mikveh users

ITIM Supreme Court victory requires the State to recognize non-governmental conversions for aliya

ITIM class action suit recoups **10 million** shekels/year in overcharged local religious council fees

## 2018

**500<sup>th</sup>** Giyur K'Halacha conversion

ITIM Supreme Court victory increases public participation in the election of the Chief Rabbinate

ITIM court victory requires the State to recognize Giyur K'Halacha conversions

ITIM court victory paves the way for the appointment of Israel's **first** female legal advisor to a rabbinical court

All **27** female Knesset Members support ITIM initiatives for gender equality in State religious services

Rabbi Farber wins the Ministry of Aliya Award for Outstanding Contribution to Israeli Society

## 2020

**1,000<sup>th</sup>** Giyur K'Halacha conversion

ITIM improves health and safety at public mikvehs during COVID pandemic

ITIM leads campaign to recruit women to serve on local religious councils

ITIM establishes the **ITIM-Shalem College Internship Program**

## 2015

ITIM establishes the **Giyur K'Halacha Conversion Court Network**

**25,000<sup>th</sup>** person contacts the Assistance Center

ITIM founds the Knesset Caucus for Peoplehood, Religion & State

Rabbi Farber wins the Nefesh B'Nefesh Bonei Zion Prize

## 2017

Advocacy Center represents **500<sup>th</sup>** family

ITIM exposes the Rabbinate's rejection of the religious authority of non-Israeli rabbis

ITIM leads an effort that blocks the Knesset's discriminatory Conversion Bill



## 2019

ITIM establishes the **Public Policy Center**

**40,000<sup>th</sup>** person contacts the Assistance Center

ITIM exposes the Rabbinate's use of DNA testing to prove Jewish identity

ITIM successfully advocates for the allocation of public funds to make mikvehs accessible to the disabled



## MISSION

ITIM works to increase participation in Jewish life by making Israel's religious establishment respectful of and responsive to the diverse Jewish needs of the Jewish people.

## GOALS

**Ensure** equal access to State religious services

**Moderate** the State's extreme interpretations of Jewish law

**Protect** civil rights in matters of State-administered Jewish life

**Improve** government transparency and accountability in matters of Jewish life

**Bridge** the divide between Jewish life in Israel and around the world

## STRATEGIES

**Work with** Israel's religious establishment to facilitate participation in Jewish life

**Advocate for** public policies that strengthen Jewish life, and against those that weaken it

**Legally challenge** State authorities to protect civil rights, and to ensure equality under the law

**Offer alternatives** to government programs to meet the needs of the broad Jewish public

**Increase** public demand for change on religion-and-State issues

## PROGRAMS

ITIM Assistance Center

ITIM Public Policy Center

ITIM Legal Center

Giyur K'Halacha Conversion Court Network

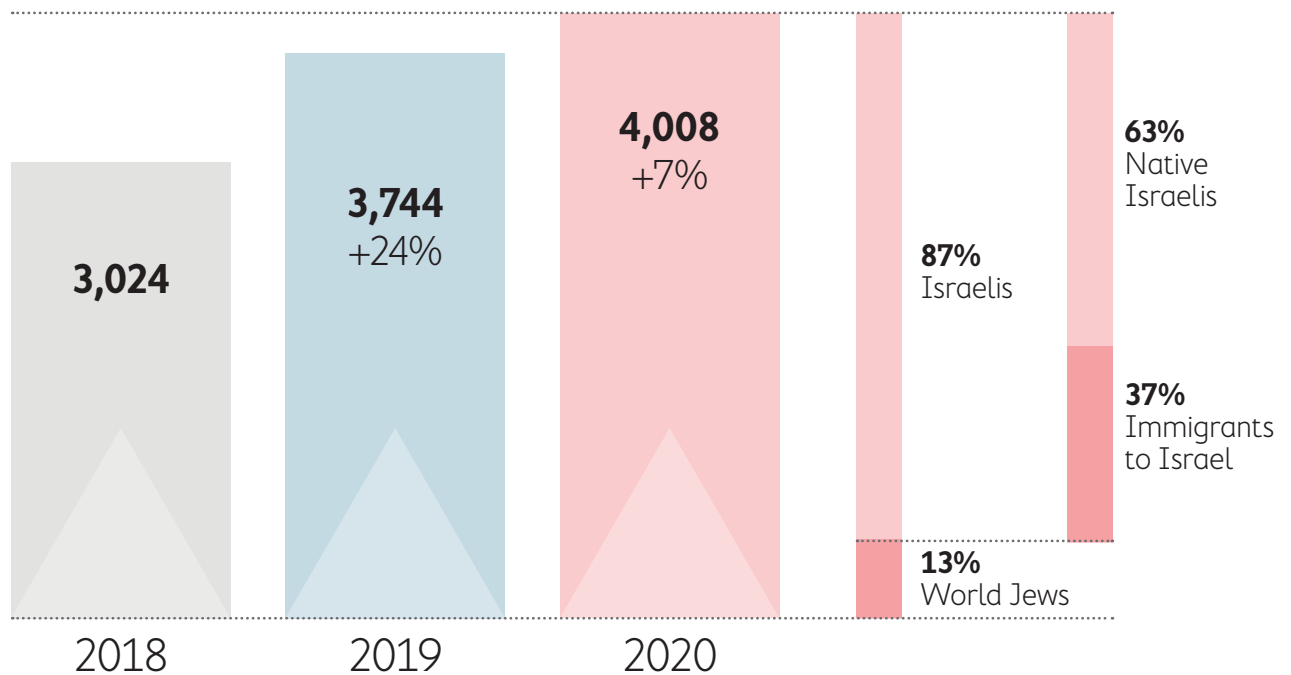
Marketing & Communications

# ITIM ASSISTANCE CENTER

The ITIM Assistance Center is *the* address for solving practical issues of religion-and-State in Israel. Through free phone and texting hotlines, the Center provides information, guidance, and support on every government-administered matter of Jewish life. Center staff troubleshoot cases with social welfare organizations and government authorities, solve complex issues of personal status, accompany families to State agencies, and represent them before rabbinical courts.

**In 2020, the Center helped 4,008 families navigate the State's religious bureaucracy, enabling them to be recognized as Jews, to have State-sanctioned weddings, to convert to Judaism, and more.**

## FAMILIES HELPED

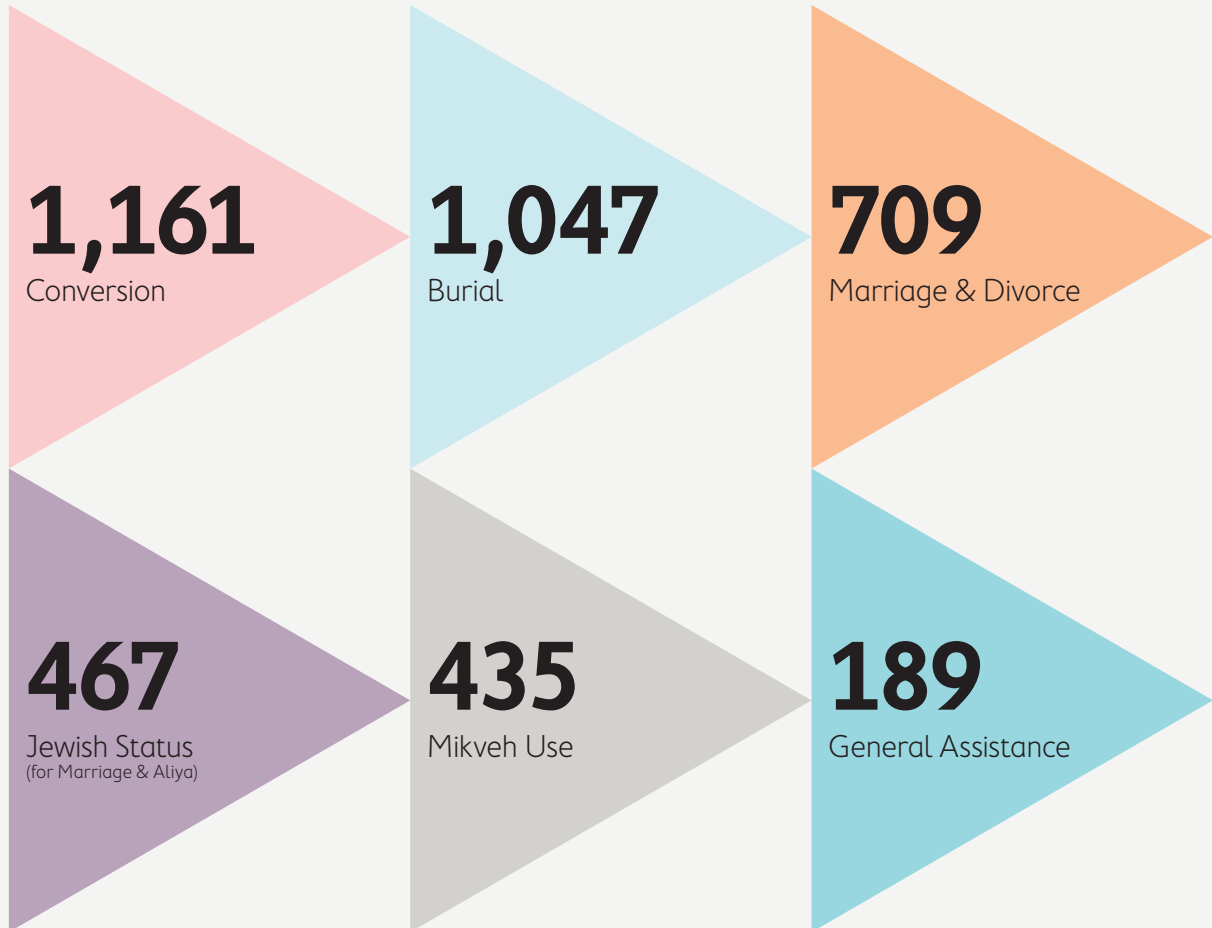


David had been struggling to become an Israeli citizen for three years. Then the ITIM Assistance Center got involved, succeeded in getting the Interior Ministry to accept the Rabbinat's recognition of his American conversion, and paved the way to his citizenship.

*"I am so thankful ITIM exists, and can help others exercise their rights in Israel."*

# ITIM ASSISTANCE CENTER

## AREAS OF HELP



Sivan and Liran wanted to have a State-sanctioned Israeli wedding. With the help of the ITIM Assistance Center, they planned it in the US, and held it in Israel—all in adherence with COVID health regulations.

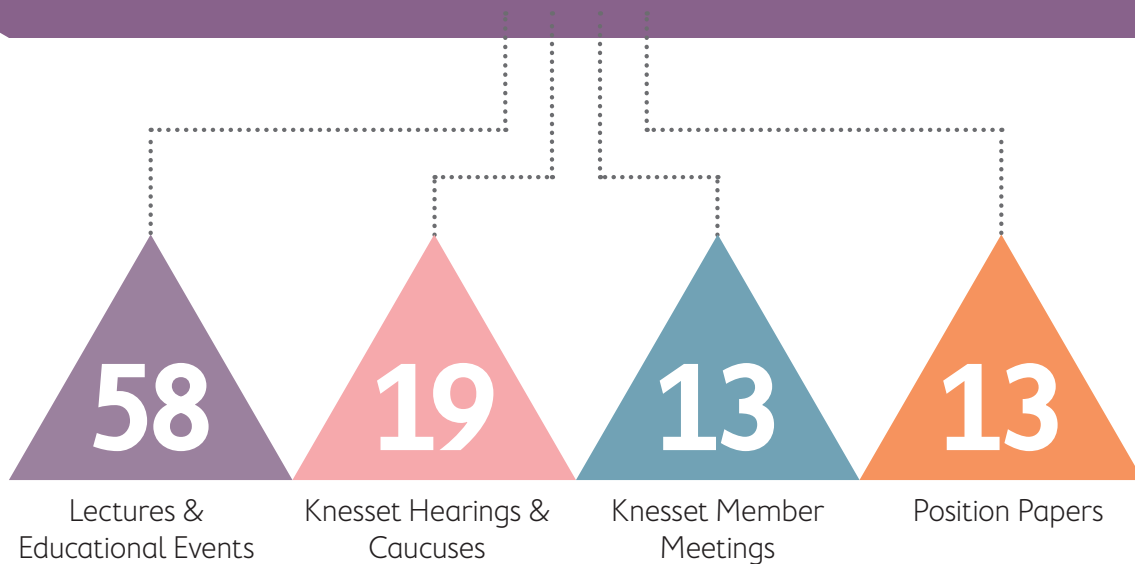
*"We can't thank the ITIM staff enough for helping us navigate the process so seamlessly, and for being so compassionate during such a difficult time. We only wish they could have been there to celebrate with us."*



# ITIM PUBLIC POLICY CENTER

The ITIM Public Policy Center promotes policy reform in State-administered matters of Jewish life. The Center monitors public policies and procedures, exposes discriminatory practices, participates in Knesset hearings, prepares position papers, and offers public education programs.

**In 2020, the Center ensured that State religious authorities complied with COVID health regulations, improved health and safety in public mikvehs, exposed the Interior Ministry's practice of denying official Jewish status to Israeli-born children of immigrants from the former Soviet Union, led a campaign to increase the number of women who serve on local religious councils, and operated an internship program.**



Interns in the ITIM-Shalem College Internship Program took courses, conducted research, and helped produce ITIM's *Performance Report on State Jewish Services during the COVID Pandemic*



# ITIM PUBLIC POLICY CENTER



Knesset Members Moshe “Bogie” Ya’alon and Michal Cotler-Wunsh came to the ITIM offices to sign our *Blueprint for Religion-and-State Policy Reform*



*“ITIM does wonderful work helping the neediest citizens, often immigrants, facing the most difficult situations because of Israel’s religious bureaucracy. I have worked with ITIM for years, and it is very close to my heart.”*

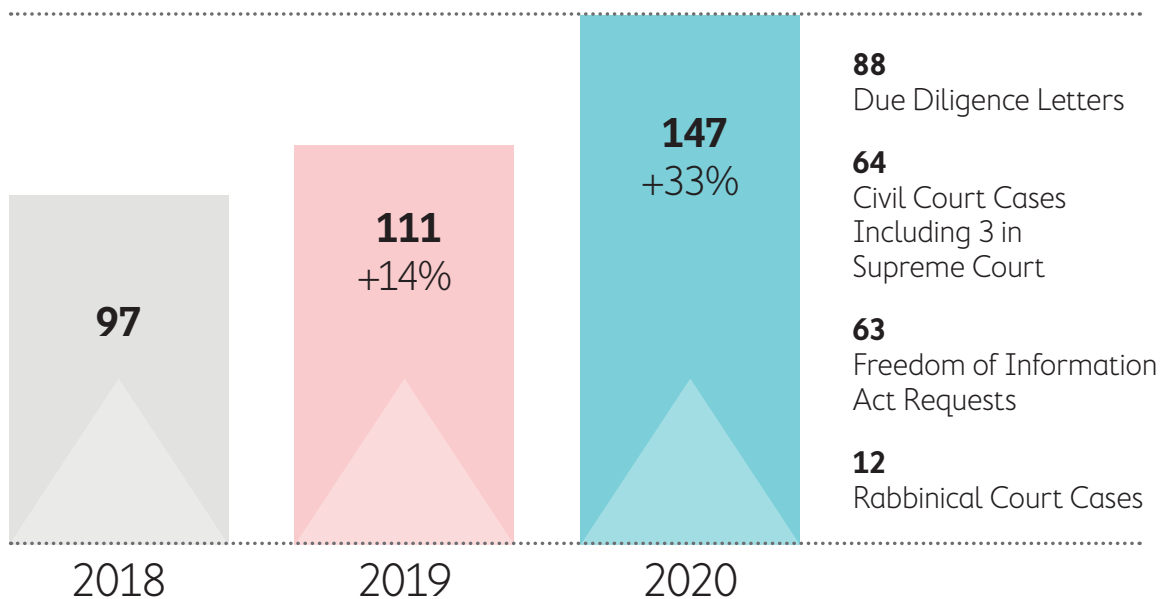
Pnina Tamanu-Shata  
Knesset Member & Israel Minister of Immigrant Absorption

# ITIM LEGAL CENTER

The ITIM Legal Center takes legal action on religion-and-State issues affecting Jewish life to protect citizens' civil rights, promote Jewish pluralism, and ensure equal access to State religious services.

In 2020, the ITIM Legal Center advanced Supreme Court cases against the Chief Rabbinate for barring women from taking State exams that certify proficiency in Jewish law, for conducting investigations into the Jewish identities of extended family members when individuals apply for State marriage licenses, and for rejecting the Jewish identity of an individual who converted through a recognized European conversion court. The Center won several cases that required the Interior Ministry to recognize the Jewish identities of Israeli-born children of immigrant parents, and of individuals who had converted to Judaism. It also succeeded in requiring the State to recognize a record number of Giyur K'Halacha conversions.

## FAMILIES REPRESENTED



The Interior Ministry recognized Sarah's Jewish identity when she made aliyah thirty years ago, but tried to re-open her case when she had a child this year. The ITIM Legal Center took on Sarah's case, and won.

*"ITIM's lawyers had handled cases like mine before, and assured me that the State was acting illegally. Within a short time, I was able to register my daughter as Jewish, and the Interior Ministry was prevented from re-investigating my personal status. And all of the work was done pro bono."*

# ITIM LEGAL CENTER



The Israel Supreme Court sided with ITIM in a preliminary hearing, when it ordered the Chief Rabbinate to justify its practice of barring women from taking State exams that certify proficiency in Jewish law

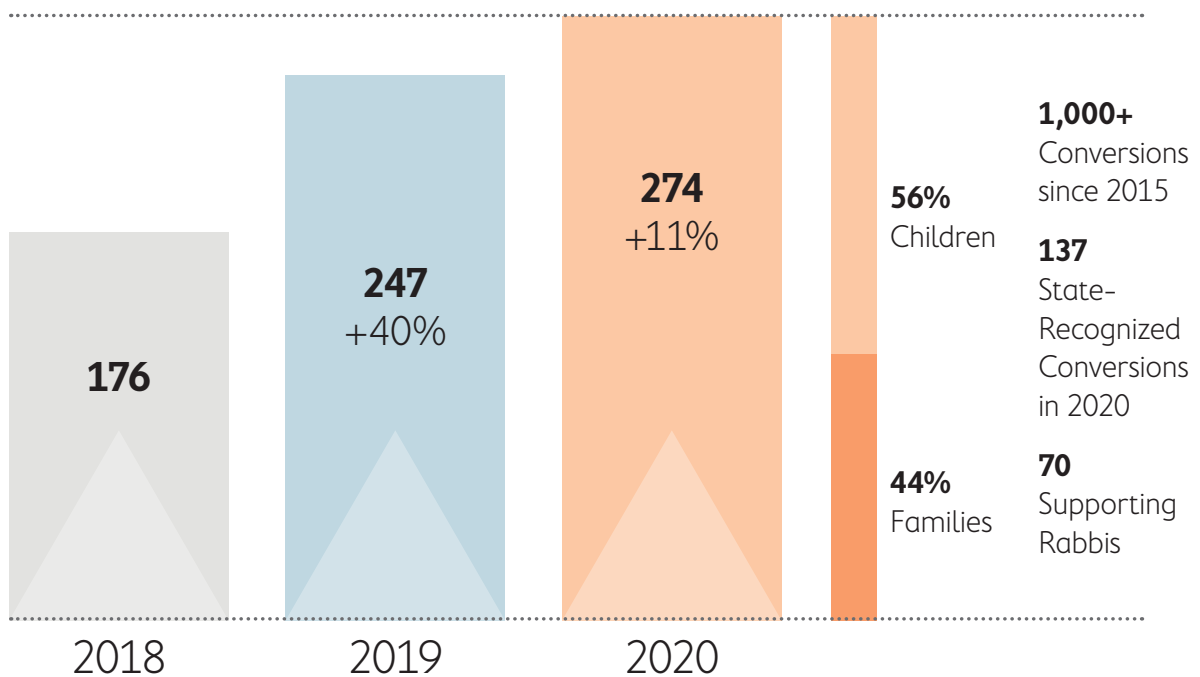


# GIYUR K'HALACHA CONVERSION COURT NETWORK

Giyur K'Halacha offers Israeli citizens an inclusive, supportive, Orthodox conversion alternative to the State conversion program. Staff assist candidates from initial inquiries to educational programs, conversion court hearings, and beyond.

**2020 was a record year for Giyur K'Halacha. It surpassed the milestone of 1,000 conversions, converted more people than in any previous year, had its largest number of conversions recognized by the State, and grew the number of rabbis who serve as conversion court judges and supporters. Giyur K'Halacha also created an alumni community to help identify new program participants, and a marriage program to enable newly converted couples to hold Jewish wedding ceremonies.**

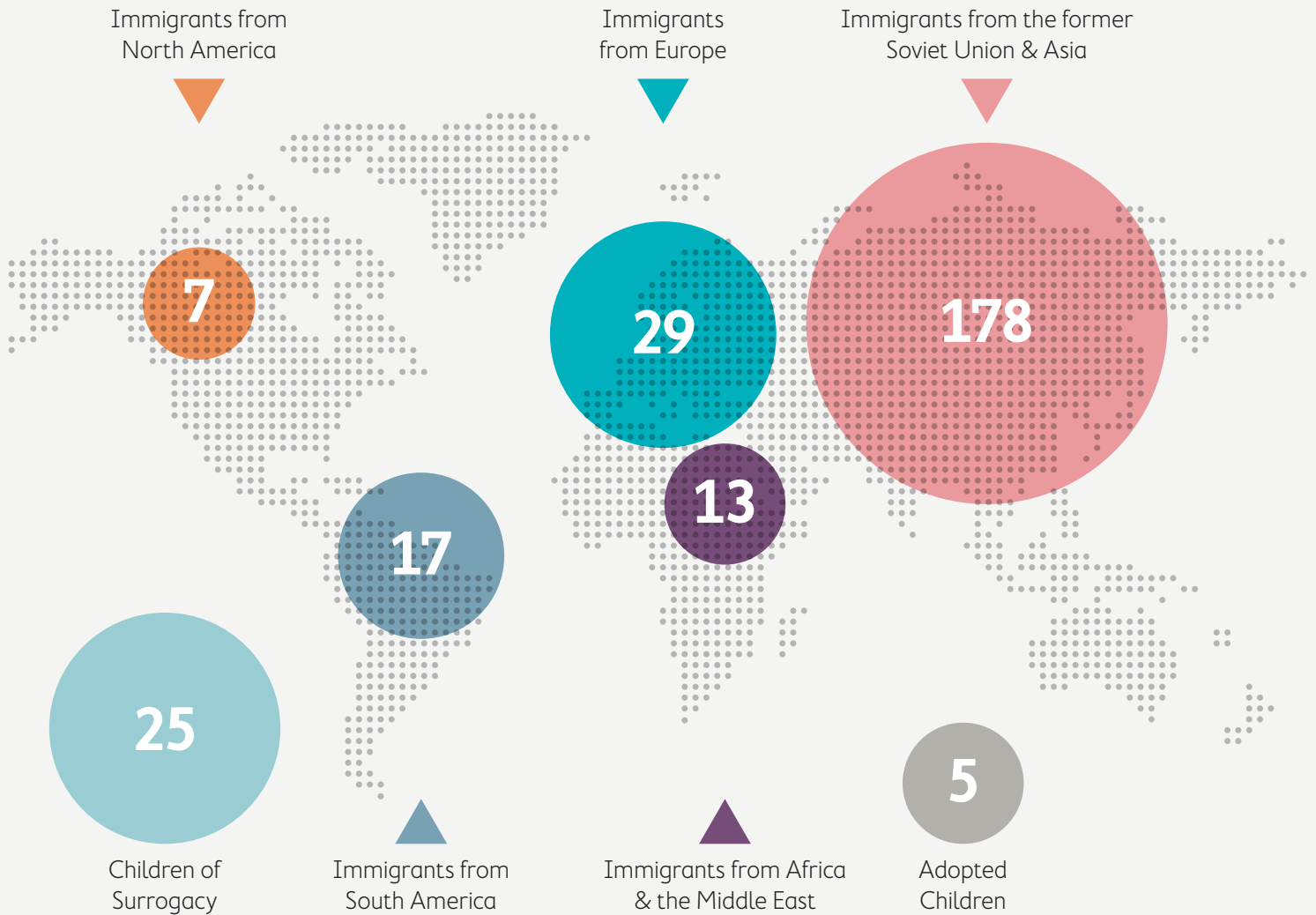
## CONVERSIONS



A child shows off her newly issued Giyur K'Halacha Conversion Certificate

# GIYUR K'HALACHA

## CONVERSION COURT NETWORK

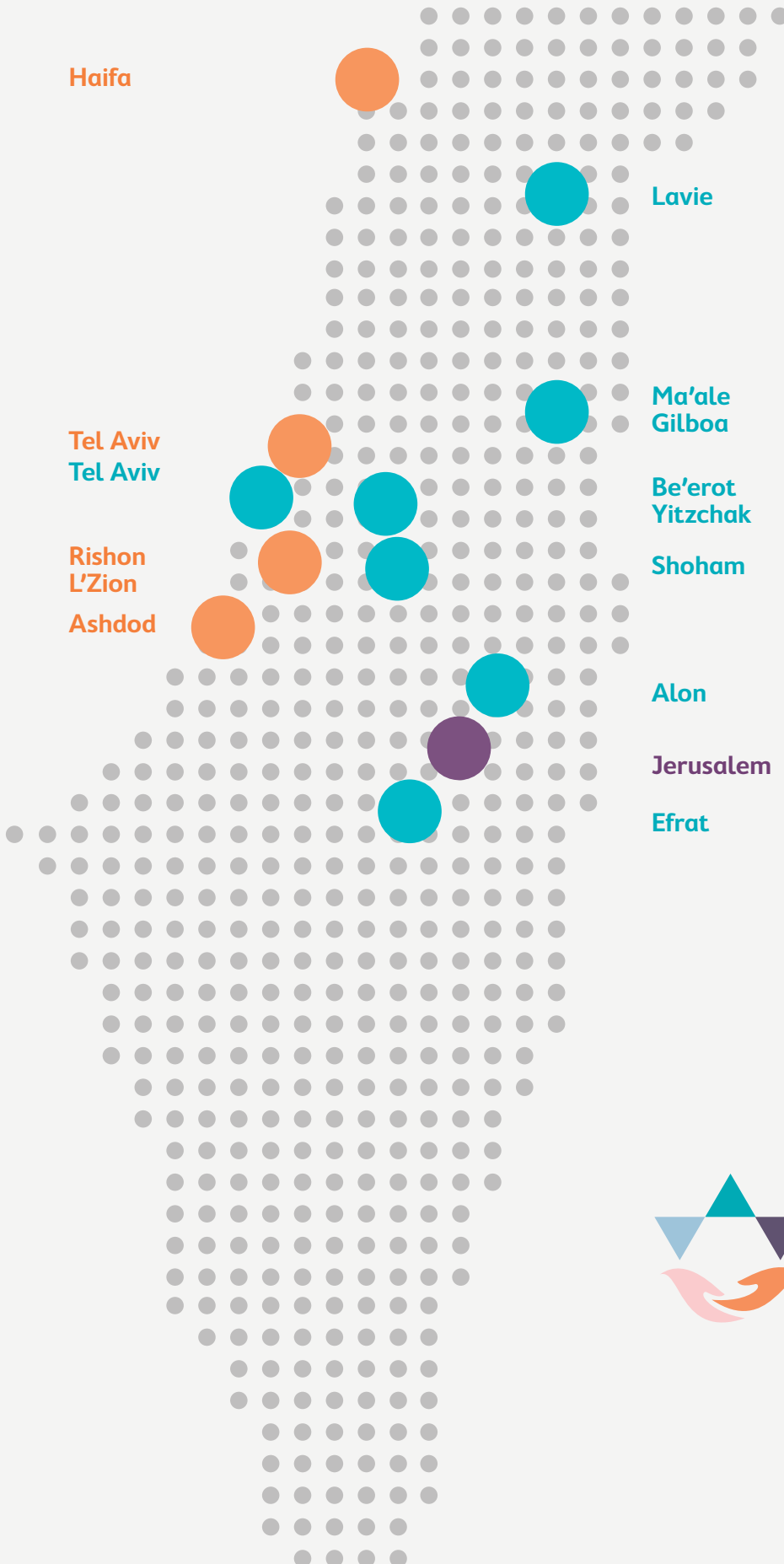


Mark is the son of Soviet immigrants. His father and maternal grandfather are Jewish, but his mother is not. Deeply committed to Jewish study and observance, Mark turned his family's Jewish past into a Jewish future by converting through Giyur K'Halacha.

*"The staff and rabbis of Giyur K'Halacha were amazing. From our initial meeting, to a to-do list, dozens of emails, and my appearance before the rabbinical court, every person involved treated me with respect and understanding."*

# GIYUR K'HALACHA

## CONVERSION COURT NETWORK



ITIM Headquarters

Giyur K'Halacha  
Branch Offices

Giyur K'Halacha  
Conversion Courts



**Giyur  
K'Halacha**  
Conversion Courts

# MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS



Rabbi Seth Farber appeared in a major Israeli TV news exposé on the Interior Ministry's unwillingness to register more than 2,000 Israel-born children of immigrants from the former Soviet Union as Jewish in the State Population Registry.

## ENGLISH-LANGUAGE MEDIA ATTENTION

**THE JERUSALEM POST**

**THE TIMES OF ISRAEL**

**HAARETZ**

**ISRAEL HAYOM**

**ARUTZ SHEVA 7**  
israelnationalnews.com

**KAN**  
Israeli Public  
Broadcasting Corp

**JTA**

**THE JEWISH PRESS.COM**

**Mosaic**

**i24 NEWS**

# MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

1,150,776

Website Page Views

371,844

Website Unique Users

55,909

Facebook Followers

23,380

Newsletter Subscribers

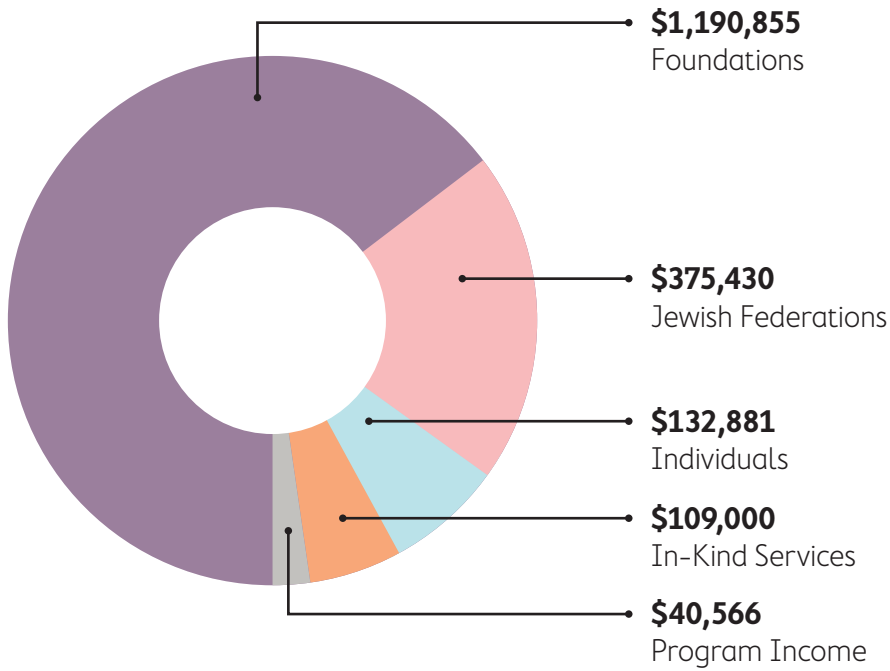
534

Articles, Interviews &  
Opinion Pieces

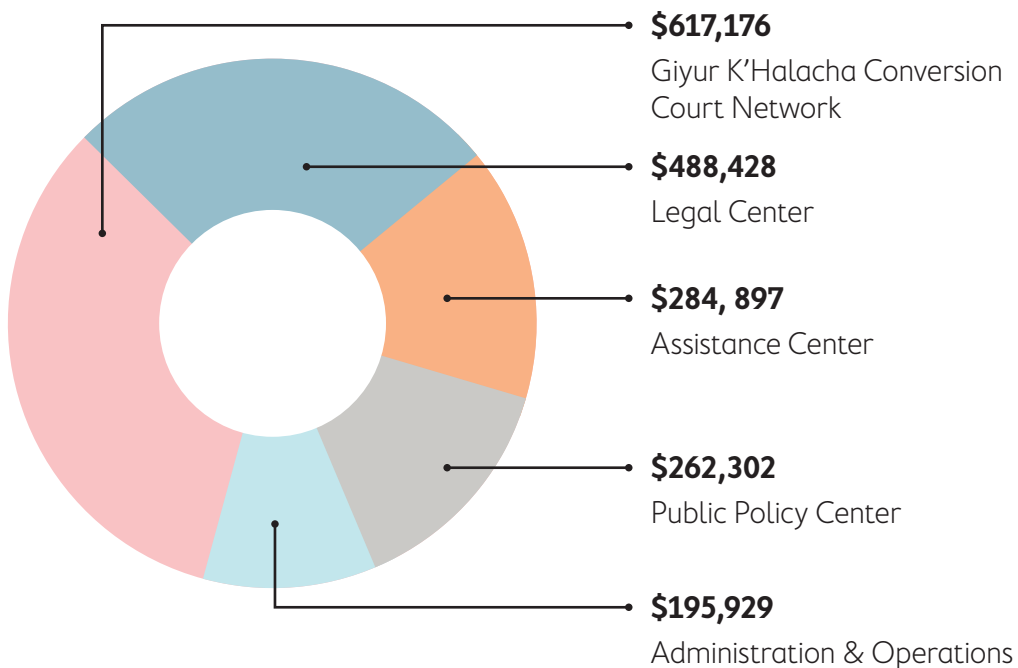


# FINANCES

REVENUE - \$1,848,732



EXPENSES - \$1,848,732



Unaudited

# Supporters

## Foundations

**Adelson Family Foundation**  
Los Angeles, CA

**Arev Fund**  
New York, NY

**Aviv Foundation**  
Washington, DC

**Azrieli Foundation Israel**  
Herzliya Pituach

**Beverly Foundation**  
Minneapolis, MN

**Charles and Lynn Schusterman  
Family Foundation**  
Tulsa, OK

**David Berg Foundation**  
New York, NY

**Jacob and Hilda Blaustein Foundation**  
Baltimore, MD

**The Russell Berrie Foundation**  
Teaneck, NJ

## Jewish Federations

Greater Miami Jewish Federation

Jewish Community Federation of San  
Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin & Sonoma  
Counties

Jewish Federation of Charleston, SC

Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas City

Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles

Jewish Federation of St. Louis

Jewish Federations of Canada-UJA

Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago

UJA-Federation of New York

## Anonymous donors

# Leadership

**ITIM Israel**  
**Steering Committee**

**Mark Ziering, Chairman**  
CreditEase

**Nehemia Davidi**  
Real Estate Development

**Adina Hagege**  
Microsoft

**Asher Levy**  
Landa Digital Printing

**Jack Levy**  
Israel Cleantech Ventures

**Avraham Well**  
FBC Law Firm

**American Friends of ITIM**  
**Board of Directors**

**Steven Pretsfelder, Chairman**  
Van Wagner Sports & Entertainment

**Daniel Conway**  
Seagram Real Estate

**Susan Fader**  
Fader Consulting

**Tovit Schultz Granoff**  
Social Activism

**William Lipsey**  
Pzena Capital

**David Sable**  
WPP

# Staff

## **Founder & Director**

Rabbi Seth Farber, PhD

## **Managing Director**

Elad Caplan

## **Finance & Operations**

Sarah Cramer, Vice President

Michelle Cohen

Hila David

## **Marketing & Communications**

Einat Levin, Director

Sheryl Abbey

Rachel Deutsch

## **ITIM Assistance Center**

Yoni Yentus, Manager

Miriam Aloni

Jenny Brenner

Michal Kozlova

Tamar Yichiya

## **ITIM Public Policy Center**

Ariel Moav, Manager

Yoel Botvinik

Ayala Goldberg

Orly Uliel

## **ITIM Legal Center**

Ella Sakat, Manager

Reut Kleinberger

Shira Lev-Tzion

Yair Mevorach-Sha'ag

Sara Weinberg

## **Giyur K'Halacha Conversion Court Network**

Yael Belenky, Manager

Tamar Gross

Shosha Pomerants

Gilad Prins

Dana Raevsky

Michael Sasson

Yifat Shamula

Haya Sharon

Avraham Vernik

Menahem Yosefi



*"By fighting for an inclusive religious establishment in Israel, ITIM is shaping a vibrant Jewish future for us all. That is why I not only invest money in ITIM, I invest myself."*

David Sable

Author, Entrepreneur & Social Activist

Board Member, American Friends of ITIM



**ITIM**

The Right To Live Jewish

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